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SUBJECT: AU POLITICAL AFFAIRS OBJECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL  
TRANSFORMATION

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: The African Union's (AU) top priority through 2007 is to push forward the process of institutional transformation to ensure a proactive and effective organization as compared to the OAU, AU Commission Secretary Prof. Johnson recently told a group of AU partners. Political Affairs Director Leonard-Emile Ognimba said that AU Commission political affairs objectives for 2006 include developing a system to improve governance oversight, organizing a debate on African constitutions, getting an AU electoral unit up and running, fostering public service reform, and strengthening the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Post comments that empowering the AU Commission to better address governance challenges in Africa has value as a means of collective pressure on member states to adopt best practices. End summary.

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CREATING A BETTER AU  
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¶2. (SBU) AU Commission Secretary Prof. C.A. Johnson told Addis-based partners that efforts to ensure an effective and proactive AU emerges out of the vestiges of the old OAU is the AU's top priority through 2007. The AU's institutional transformation project involves strengthening AU Commission management, support structure and operations; rationalizing institutions of the union; and promoting better organizational governance. (Note: AU officials often highlight the contradiction in member state and international community expectations that the AU Commission will already begin to deliver on major issues of peace and security, health, and other matters while the organization has yet to put adequate institutional structures in place. End note.)

¶3. (SBU) Prof. Johnson said the AU intends to use knowledge-based management and information communications technology to improve departmental interaction and information sharing. At present, he noted, departments tend to work in a vacuum and do not consult sufficiently on cross-cutting issues or programs. (Note: A Swedish-Norwegian VSAT program will form the backbone of the AU's knowledge-based management effort. The AU Commission has also submitted an ESF grant proposal to the USG to improve network infrastructure. Fifty million dollars provided by India will be devoted to linking AU member states to tele-education and tele-medicine programs. End note.)

¶4. (SBU) The AU Commission will reach out to its staff to create buy-in for institutional change. Prof. Johnson said that the AU is using a culture change management consultancy

to improve human resources outreach.

¶5. (SBU) Prof. Johnson said that the AU intends to improve organizational governance by solidifying and clarifying links between the AU Commission and other AU organs such as the Pan African Parliament (PAP). Johnson explained that, in the absence of such oversight, many AU organs have developed their own rules of procedure and begun to independently solicit funds, which has caused confusion. Johnson said that the AU is just beginning to staff the Peace and Security Council (PSC) Secretariat, but Commission staff had taken on the responsibility of drafting reports and organizing consultations in the absence of the Secretariat.

¶6. (SBU) Note: AU member states allocated 9.3 million dollars for institutional transformation needs, Canada has pledged 4.5 million Canadian dollars, and the EU will devote a portion of a 55 million euro, three-year contribution to AU institutional transformation. End note.

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POLITICAL AFFAIRS OBJECTIVES  
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¶7. (SBU) In the same meeting, Political Affairs Director Leonard-Emile Ognimba and Governance, Elections, Democracy, and Human Rights Head of Division Mamadou Dia outlined AU political affairs priorities for 2006.

Draft Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance  
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¶8. (SBU) Dia said that the AU will hold a meeting of experts April 2 and 4 in Addis to encourage adoption of the Draft

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Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance at the Banjul Summit in July 2006. The AU will also assess implementation of the Lome Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government and chart a way forward for that declaration. Dia echoed the complaints of other AU Commission officials that there are too many coups in Africa and the AU is not empowered to deal with poor governance and other circumstances which can lead to coups.

¶9. (SBU) The draft charter will bring together the Lome Declaration, the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights into one legally binding instrument which calls on member states to build solid democratic institutions. The charter is expected to complement NEPAD African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) efforts. (Note: For more information on this project, see [www.africa.union.org/root/AU/conferences/past/2006/april/pa/apr7/meeting.htm](http://www.africa.union.org/root/AU/conferences/past/2006/april/pa/apr7/meeting.htm). End note.)

African Constitutions  
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¶10. (SBU) According to Ognimba, the AU plans to hold a debate on African constitutions in November 2006. The AU Commission is concerned by recent manipulations of constitutions by African leaders and wants to develop a best practices template for African constitutions to avoid crises of governance, Ognimba stated.

¶11. (SBU) AU member states did not allocate any funding for this activity, but Dia confirmed that member states approved its inclusion in the AU Commission's work plan provided funding is received from other sources. EC, Canadian, and EU member state development agency representatives present at the meeting expressed reservations about funding activities which do not have clear backing by AU member states, but Dia retorted that the AU Commission's role is to hold member states to a higher standard. He said that African leaders who benefit from poor governance would of course be reluctant

to approve an activity designed to limit their latitude of action, and asked for partner support to produce needed institutional change on the continent. Dia added that outside pressure is sometimes required to move positive agendas ahead.

#### Electoral Assistance Unit

¶12. (SBU) Dia said that, while the AU fields observers to elections in Africa upon invitation, the AU actually wants to develop a comprehensive Electoral Assistance Unit with training, capacity building and other components. He mentioned that the EU and USAID are considering support for this activity (Note: USAID plans to further define a program of support based on an AU project document during an April 18-21 visit to Addis. End note.)

#### Public Service Reform

¶13. (SBU) Ognimba explained that the AU Commission is working with the NEPAD Secretariat and the South African Ministry of Public Administration to implement the AU Charter on Public Service. The AU also wants to ensure member state ratification of the AU anti-corruption mechanism, as four more ratifications are required for it to enter into force.

#### Human Rights

¶14. (SBU) Ognimba said that the AU plans an assessment of the Banjul-based African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) to determine how to strengthen the organization. He noted that some member states have questioned the ACHPR's reports on procedural grounds (such as at the January 2006 Khartoum Summit), and the Commission wants to eliminate such obstacles to the ACHPR's effectiveness.

#### COMMENT

¶15. (SBU) The AU Commission is moving into sensitive areas as it attempts to hold member states to a higher standard of governance and respect for human rights, but its efforts should be supported as a means of applying collective

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pressure on African countries to adopt best practices. The Commission's strong stance on Togo was softened in the face of regional resistance, and it is now trying to better institutionalize mechanisms to address poor governance. Part of that effort involves a plan to empower AU organs such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, to streamline NEPAD, and to break out of the OAU's self-censure mold. Similarly, success of the institutional transformation project is critical to producing a better managed and more capable AU. The AU Commission will require strong support from key partners such as the USG, if it is to succeed.

HUDDLESTON